

Cheese: A Never Ending Story

Tony Amato (July 21, 2013)



In the past few decades Italy's soft cheeses have gradually taken over the French ones for variety and quality. So don't let yourself be tempted to substitute Italian Gorgonzola with the less expensive Roquefort...

Cheese in Italy is a true journey in itself with discoveries that may reserve authentic surprises for our palate but also of our Italy. Every corner of the peninsula hides its own way of producing it, tied to the climate, land and tradition, but also to innovation which has not overlooked this sector.

We invite all, once in Italy, to search out these cheeses not only in restaurants and grocery stores. Go directly to the various farms which are oftentimes family run. If you are fortunate enough, you might even be able to watch how the cheese is made. Mozzarella is not the only cheese in Italy. Production is endless and with diverse characteristics.

Until a few decades ago, when outside of Italy people spoke about soft or semi-hard cheeses they



mainly referred to French cheeses. Now, that is no longer the case. Soft Italian cheeses, those with a high percentage of water contained in the texture, are the most sought out.

We have chosen some; it was not easy. You could write a book. To begin with, we'd like to recall an advertisement that has accompanied generations and was very successful in making children like strong cheeses like gorgonzola, which often required a mature palate. The ad was made for a gorgonzola produced by Invernizzi and called Gim, so soft that it was almost liquid. The slogan was "If you see the drop, it's Gim." And do not be tempted to substitute Italian gorgonzola with the less expensive Roquefort. You will find that there is no comparison. Use it less. Eat it less. It has a full flavor. Given the caloric content of this type of food, it will also benefit your figure.

1 - [STRACCHINO](#) [2]

Various producers especially in the North

● Made from whole cow's milk in Northern Italy since the Middle Ages, Stracchino is the father of all Italian soft cheeses. Its name indicates that it is made with the milk of tired cows (stracco meaning tired in Lombard and Tuscan dialects). According to tradition, cows returning tired from summer pastures on the mountain hillsides, produced little milk, with which the shepherds made precisely this cheese, the stracchino. Indeed cows who are moved seasonally, up and down the Alps to different pastures, do make a milk richer in fats and more acidic, which gives stracchino its characteristic flavors.

2 - [TALEGGIO](#) [3]

Taleggio Cheese Protection Union

● This is an old cheese, produced as early as the Middle Ages. It owes its name to the Val Taleggio, situated in the province of Bergamo. Until the early 1900s, Taleggio was called "stracchino quadro di Milano." Since 1986, Taleggio was included in the list of DOP (Protected Designation of Origin) products recognized by the European Union and its protected by a consortium as all the other cheeses present here.

3 - [FONTINA](#) [4]

Producers Consortium and DOP Fontina Safeguarding Body

● On the etymology of this word, there are many versions. The name derives from the Fontin hill country in the town of Quart. There are even those who can trace their family name back to cheese producers. It is the famous cheese par excellence from the Aosta Valley that is produced on the mountainside pastures, making cheese twice a day with milk produced from cows specific to the Aosta Valley. Fontina is the cheese which is used in the traditional dish, Fonduta, in the Piedmont and in the Aosta Valley.

4- [ROBIOLA](#) [5]

Consortium for the protection of Robiola di Roccaverano DOP

● The name of the robiola derives from the late-Latin term "rubeolus" referring to the reddish-pink color on the surface of the cheese created during the aging process. The name is linked to Roccaverano, a town in the province of Asti, but the cheese's production area includes the territory that straddles the provinces of Asti and Alessandria in the eastern part of the Langhe. Produced with cow, goat, and sheep's milk, it is also mixed in various proportions. The characteristics of the Robiola vary, and the form might be cylindrical or squared.

5 - [MONTASIO](#) [6]

Consortium for the Protection of Montasio Cheese

● It takes its name from the Montasio range in Friuli. This cheese was originally produced in its alpine hills – the first reliable evidence dates back to the 1700s – with unique characteristics, thanks to the fortunate combination of the three fundamental and very particular factors: the hay, the milk, and the mountain air. Today, this production has spread throughout the Friulian plains, in the valleys and hills of Belluno and Treviso, in the Veneto plain between Piave and Brenta, rigorously preserving the original characteristics of production.

6 - [QUARTIROLO LOMBARDO](#) [7]

Consortium for the Protection of Quartirolo Lombardo

● This is a soft table cheese produced with cow's milk. The beginning of its production dates back



to the 10th century. The production was seasonal. The cheese was produced in late summer with the milk from cows, which had been nourished on “erba quartirolo”, or rather from the grass regrown after the third cut. Today, it is produced all year long. The area of the milk’s origin, of the production, and of the maturing of the cheese “Quartirolo Lombardo” includes the land in the provinces of Brescia, Bergamo, Como, Cremona, Lecco, Lodi, Milano, Pavia, and Varese.

7- [GORGONZOLA](#) [8]

Consortium for the Protection of Gorgonzola Chees

● A blue-veined cheese produced from whole cow’s milk, Gorgonzola takes its name from the homonymous Lombard town near Milan that was its birthplace, probably around the 15th century. In the 1800s, the production of this cheese grew considerably and it was exported to other Italian regions as well as to England. Today Gorgonzola is produced in the provinces of Milan, Como, Pavia, and Novara. In 1996, Gorgonzola was acknowledged by the European Union and recorded in the list of “Protected Designation of Origin” products.

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[2] <http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Stracchino>

[3] <http://www.taeggio.it>

[4] <http://www.consorzioproduttorefontina.it>

[5] <http://www.roboladiroccaverano.com>

[6] <http://www.formaggiomontasio.net>

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